



Maintain and Stay Sane through the Holidays Campaign



Week five focus: Get Moving! Stay Active!

Reset Your Exercise Goals

Adjusting your daily exercise goals for the holiday season keeps you active while avoiding disappointment if you don't exercise as much as usual. The American Council on Exercise recommends aiming for shorter exercise sessions each day. If you normally work out for an hour each day, scale it back to 20 minutes. Your adjusted holiday exercise goals are more attainable, making them easier to fit into a busy holiday schedule. You may end up working out for your usual hour on most days, but you have less pressure, allowing you to enjoy the holidays.

Exercise Together

For most people, the holidays include spending time with family and friends. You may visit friends and family who you only see a few times a year. To maximize your time with them, exercise together. Go for a walk or cross country skiing. You can fit in physical activity while bonding with your exercise partner.

Organize an Active Gathering

The American Council on Exercise recommends modifying your idea of a holiday gathering. Instead of focusing on food, plan an active holiday gathering for your family or friends. Meet up at a local sledding hill or ice skating rink before enjoying a light, healthy meal together. The active holiday party allows you to work in your daily exercise without giving up time with your family and friends. It also makes your holiday event stand out as something different than the usual food-centered parties. My family has now made it an annual family event to go bowling the week between Christmas and New Year's – yes all 20-something of us!! We're not only having fun and creating memories, but working in some physical activity as well!

Squeeze in Fitness With Holiday Chores

A sweat-drenched session at the gym isn't the only way to fit in exercise during the holidays. If you're short on time, combine your holiday chores with exercise. Walking the mall at a fast pace while holiday shopping allows you to cross off two items from your to-do list. Even better...take twenty minutes before shopping, park as far away as possible and power walk around the perimeter of the mall with a friend.

The She Knows Health and Wellness website recommends squeezing in some exercises while cooking your holiday meal. Dancing while you cook, squatting to grab items, lifting weights with canned food and doing push-ups against the countertop are simple exercises you can perform in the kitchen.



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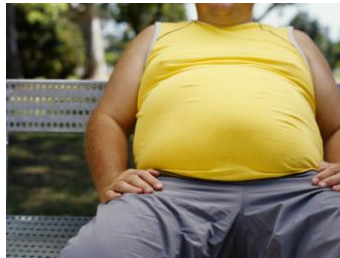


The Truth About Sitting Down...

Have you heard the latest? You are probably doing it right now – and it is slowly killing you! Yes, sitting down for more than six hours a day makes you up to 40% likelier to die within 15 years than someone who sits less than three hours a day - even if you exercise! Scientists have long known that sedentary lifestyles lead to health risks like weight gain, obesity and type 2 diabetes, but these new findings are an eye-opener!

Our bodies are not designed to sit for long periods of time; whether tending our crops or hunting for food, most of our lives as humans were lived on our feet. But with modern technology such as TVs and computers, and the desk job, we are sitting down more than ever before in history: **9.3 hours a day**, even more time than we spend sleeping (7.7 hours).

Sitting makes us fat. Those individuals classified as obese sit on average 2.5 more hours per day than thinner people. Between 1980 and 2000 exercise rates stayed the same, but sitting time increased by 8% and obesity doubled. Sitting expends very little energy.



How Sitting Wrecks Your Body

The effects of sitting are not just long term, though. Your body goes into meltdown the moment you sit down. As soon as you sit electrical activity in the leg muscles shuts off. Calorie burning drops to one-third of standing, and enzymes that help break down fat drop 90%. After two hours, the good cholesterol drops 20%, and after 24 hours insulin effectiveness drops 24%, and risk of diabetes rises. Muscle contractions, including the ones required for standing, seem to trigger important processes related to the breakdown of fats and sugars. When you sit down, muscle contractions cease and these processes stall. People with sitting jobs have twice the rate of cardiovascular disease as people with standing jobs.

Individuals who sit three hours or more per day watching television are 64% more likely to die from heart disease. Of those who sit in front of the TV three hours per day, those who exercise are just as overweight as those who do not. Each hour of watching television equates to an 11% higher death risk.



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What to do?

The human body simply is not built to sit for long periods of time. A hundred years ago, when we were all toiling in the fields and factories, obesity was basically nonexistent. But since we can't exactly run free in the fields until the end of our days, we have to help our bodies in other ways. We have to stand up for our right to stand up! The solution seems to be less sitting and more moving. Simply by standing, you burn three times as many calories as you do sitting.

- If you find yourself sitting for many hours at a time, interrupt your patterns. Stand up, move around and get your blood flowing at least once an hour.
- If you spend a lot of time on the phone, try to stand up while talking and walking in place if possible.
- Take the low-tech route. At work, walk over to a co-worker instead of relying on email or instant messaging.
- Increase your steps. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Buy a pedometer or just try to walk more in general. You will reduce the amount of sitting you do and work in some physical activity at the same time.
- You don't have to miss your favorite television show, just don't sit while watching. Step up and down on a box or step, alternating the lead foot every five minutes. Make sure the entire foot lands on the box and your heel is not hanging off the back. If you have a piece of fitness equipment that has been collecting dust or used as a clothes hanger put it in front of the television and USE IT!

Bottom line to help the bottom line: Just move it!! “You got to move it, move it!!”

References:

[American Council on Exercise: ACE's Top 10 Tips for Surviving the Holidays](#)

[She Knows Health and Wellness: Holiday Fitness Tips: Burn Calories in the Kitchen](#)

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